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Letter dated 17 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the unlawful launch of the Kerch Strait bridge by the Russian Federation (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-08480 (E) 300518

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Annex to the letter dated 17 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the unlawful launch of the Kerch Strait bridge by the Russian Federation

15 May 2018

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine expresses its strong protest against the launch of the bridge across the Kerch Strait and once again underlines that the construction of this infrastructure facility by the Russian Federation without the consent of Ukraine is unlawful.

Such actions by Moscow fundamentally contradict the generally recognized norms and principles of international law; grossly violate the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 and bilateral treaty obligations to Ukraine.

In the context of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine and the temporary occupation of the Crimean Peninsula it is in fact an attempt to legitimize the annexation of part of Ukraine's sovereign territory.

The construction of the bridge, just like any other actions of the Kremlin's occupying authorities, in no way will change the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as an integral part of the territory of Ukraine in its internationally recognized borders. The Russian Federation, as an occupying power, is fully responsible for the consequences of its internationally wrongful acts and will reimburse the harm caused.

Ukraine will consistently work to expand national and international sanctions against individuals and legal entities involved in the illegal construction of the Kerch Strait bridge.

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18 May 2018

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Letter dated 17 May 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Sweden and Peru, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, hereby share a summary of the meeting held on 29 March 2018 on women and peace and security in Iraq (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gustavo **Meza-Cuadra**
Permanent Representative of Peru
to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Permanent Representative of Sweden
to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Karen **Pierce**
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom
to the United Nations

18-08092 (E) 040618

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Annex to the letter dated 17 May 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary the meeting on Iraq, 29 March 2018

On 29 March, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security held a meeting on women and peace and security in Iraq, as a follow-up to the meeting held in June 2017 (see S/2017/624). The members received a briefing from the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), accompanied by representatives of UNAMI and the United Nations country team. The Deputy Special Representative provided a comprehensive overview of key developments since the previous meeting and of progress and challenges in implementing commitments with regard to women and peace and security. She also affirmed that the protection and empowerment of women would remain a key priority for UNAMI.

Member States asked questions about strategies for increasing the participation of women in politics and decision-making, the Government's position on shelters, the proposed amendments to the Personal Status Law, efforts to abolish article 409 of the Iraqi Penal Code mitigating so-called "honour" killings, the remaining women and girls held in captivity by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) and the lack of funding for the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. They sought clarity on gender mainstreaming within UNAMI and on the recommendation by the external review team, pursuant to its recent assessment of the Mission, to integrate the women's protection unit into the Human Rights Office. Other questions were focused on civil society engagement in gathering evidence for the soon-to-be established investigative team to support efforts to hold ISIL (Da'esh) accountable for crimes carried out in Iraq, preparations for a second national action plan and the integration of gender issues in the recovery and resilience programme launched by the Secretary-General on 14 February 2018 at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq. Several Member States advocated the inclusion of gender expertise as a required competence in the terms of reference of the investigative team on ISIL (Da'esh) crimes carried out in Iraq, and the strong inclusion of women and peace and security considerations in upcoming negotiations for the renewal of the Mission's mandate and in budgetary discussions in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

Participants shared information about the political participation of women, the national action plan on women and peace and security, the prevention of and responses to conflict-related sexual violence and other human rights issues that affect women and girls especially, as well as the work of the Mission and the country team. For example, Iraq has made progress in advancing the political representation of women: a minimum of 25 per cent of elected legislative positions are reserved for women, and there are visible female politicians and civil society leaders at both the national and provincial levels. However, women remain underrepresented at all levels. There are only two women in the Council of Ministers, and the Independent High Electoral Commission leading the organization of the parliamentary elections in May did not include a single woman, in spite of sustained advocacy by the United Nations. The United Nations has been urging the appointment of more women to political leadership roles and their inclusion in negotiations for government formation

after the elections, whether through awareness-raising campaigns and technical workshops, through technical assistance and support provided to the gender team of the Electoral Commission or as part of interactions between the United Nations and the country's senior leaders. At the end of 2017, there was significant public protest led by women's civil society groups in opposition to amendments of the Personal Status Law that would infringe on the rights of women and girls, such as lowering the legal age for marriage or legalizing polygamy. To date, both women's groups and women Members of Parliament have been successful in blocking the adoption of these amendments, which are proposed from time to time. This situation shows the importance of the political participation and representation of women in safeguarding women's rights.

Since the previous meeting of the Informal Expert Group, the Government has accelerated its efforts to implement the national action plan by establishing a national coordination team chaired by the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers and with high-level representation from both the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. Women's groups have collaborated with local authorities to develop and adopt local plans in Baghdad, Diyala, Anbar, Basrah and Diwaniyah Governorates. A formal report of results and achievements so far will be shared with the Security Council later in 2018, and national actors are working on the next iteration of the action plan. Both the current and the future plan were discussed at a recent conference hosted by the United Nations, at which the Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, gave a keynote speech focused on inclusion and pluralism. UNAMI and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) have recommended that the main coordination mechanism for the national action plan, namely, the cross-sector task force, be elevated to the ministerial level after the elections, which would increase the chances of budget allocations at a time when a lack of resources continues to hamper the implementation of both the national and the local plans.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict visited Iraq in March. During her visit, the implementation plan for the joint communiqué on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence was validated, and a Government-run shelter for survivors of gender-based violence was inaugurated in Baghdad, managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and supported by the United Nations Population Fund. That was the first such shelter in Iraq outside the Kurdistan Region, where there are already three such shelters, and there are plans to build another four in other parts of Iraq, starting in Mosul. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have expressed concern about the draft guidelines for the functioning of the shelter because they require that survivors be referred by the national family court, which has previously been identified as an entry barrier. Important gaps in services for survivors remain, especially in long-term mental health, economic livelihood support and the protection of children born of rape. While survivors come from a wide range of communities, only a few religious leaders have condemned violence and shifted the stigma away from victims. Because many women and girls have been liberated from the control and custody of ISIL (Da'esh), the focus must shift to rehabilitation and reintegration and the need for support for women and children, as well as efforts to repair the social fabric and restore social cohesion. The rising tide of violent extremism and attacks on women's rights has been a topic of discussion for several years, but the waning of that tide would also leave women and children vulnerable to other forms of violence, including forced marriage, honour killings and multiple and intersecting stigmas, including the stigma of association with violent extremist groups and the targeting of ethnic and religious minorities through sexual violence in order to attack and alter group identities. The threat of reprisals, including honour crimes and other violence, can also prevent and inhibit the safe return of women and girls. Significant progress has

been made in establishing a monitoring framework to document sexual violence by all parties, but, even though the sexual violence crimes committed by ISIL (Da'esh) have been characterized as war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorism, not one perpetrator has been held legally accountable as at the time of writing.

The Government and the United Nations recently agreed on terms of reference for the investigative team to support Iraqi domestic efforts to hold ISIL (Da'esh) accountable for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, as called for by the Security Council in resolution 2379 (2017), and the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs will visit Iraq with a legal team to advance the preparations for such a team. UN-Women has trained local NGOs to support them in their documentation efforts. It has also partnered with the Ministry of Justice to support justice professionals on gender-based violence cases. The United Nations Gender Task Force for Iraq and the country team will ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout the investigative process.

At the time of writing, the gender advisory unit of UNAMI is part of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, a structure that works well for UNAMI because it is the most effective for ensuring that gender is mainstreamed across the work of the Mission.

The recovery and resilience programme launched by the Secretary-General covers a two-year period and includes nine areas that deal with revitalizing communities, promoting sustainable returns, supporting survivors and promoting political participation and reconciliation. The country team is currently developing cross-cutting papers for the nine areas, one of them being gender equality. The team is fully aware that failing to address the reintegration of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and the economic livelihoods of women would negatively affect reconstruction efforts.

In addition, UNAMI submitted a detailed mapping of gender expertise and gender balance in the Mission, as well as two updates — one on Yazidi women and girls in captivity and the other on article 409 of the Iraqi Penal Code, with regard to a defence plea of "honour" used to mitigate charges brought against males who had committed acts of murder and violence against women or family members. As at 1 April 2018, according to the Department of Yazidi Affairs, 3,154 Yazidis (1,471 women and 1,683 men) are still being held captive by ISIL (Da'esh). In addition, around 1,200 Turkmen Shi'a (including some 600 women and 250 children) are reported missing. It is impossible to tell how many of the victims are still alive. In spite of sustained lobbying and awareness campaigns by the United Nations and civil society groups, article 409 remains in force in Iraq, except in the Kurdistan Region, where it was repealed three years ago. According to the family and children protection unit within the Ministry of the Interior, in 2017 there were 272 cases of so-called "honour crimes" reported to the police and referred to the courts, an increase from the 224 cases reported to the police in 2016. In addition, there were approximately 3,400 cases of domestic violence reported to the police in 2017 (compared with 3,200 in 2016). In its published reports, UNAMI continues to recommend that the Government abolish article 409 and issue directives that require officials responsible for law enforcement and the administration of justice to promptly and impartially investigate all allegations of violence against women, in particular suspected "honour crimes", to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. The UNAMI Human Rights Office has been working closely with stakeholders, notably civil society organizations, relevant Parliamentary Committees and government officials to promote a draft family protection law (anti-domestic violence bill), which includes measures to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and offer protection to

survivors, and to ensure the accountability of perpetrators of violence in compliance with international standards.

As the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, UN-Women has announced that the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund would soon be used to fund activities in Iraq. The entity has also reminded members that the recommendations from previous meetings were still relevant and made some additional recommendations, which include the following:

- In upcoming resolutions on Iraq, the current language on gender equality and the rights of women and minorities should be maintained. In addition, the Security Council may wish to recommend that any language referring to the investigative team established pursuant to resolution 2379 (2017) should mention gender expertise and the targeting of women who do not conform to ascribed gender roles.

- The Council should continue to monitor the participation of women in decision-making in general, and in elections in particular, during the post-electoral period and government formation, national reconciliation and the national settlement initiative, including regarding the establishment of women's peace councils in the liberated areas, and any political dialogue between the Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The Council should support the use of temporary special measures to ensure a minimum level of representation for women in decision-making within political parties and in appointed government positions.

- The Co-Chairs should request further information on the integration of gender considerations in counter-terrorism efforts in Iraq and in the country's draft national strategy, as well as assistance from the United Nations in this regard, in the light of the recent visit to Iraq by the heads of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

- As a matter of crucial importance, particular attention should be paid to the economic recovery of women, taking into consideration the Secretary-General's commitment to allocate 15 per cent of all peacebuilding and recovery funds to gender and women's empowerment.

The Co-Chairs expressed thanks to those who had briefed the Informal Experts Group for their participation in the meeting. They also committed themselves to following up with the different actors to discuss which among them could take the lead in implementing the above-mentioned recommendations and urged all members to highlight those issues during the negotiations on the renewal of the Mission's mandate.

United Nations S/2018/476

Security Council

Distr.: General
18 May 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 17 May 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith an information bulletin dated 17 May 2018 from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) D. **Polyanskiy**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

18-08112 (E) 180518 220518

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Annex to the letter dated 17 May 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (17 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire: four in Aleppo Governorate and two in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported five incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: three in Idlib, one in Aleppo and one in Ladhiqiyah.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation to provide medical assistance to school children in the Mazra'ah neighbourhood of Damascus.

In total, 1,809 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,564.46 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 38 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 80,563 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,512.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/477

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 April 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 10 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing on behalf of the 25 members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT Group),[1] regarding Security Council action against the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

One year after the horrific chemical weapon attacks in Khan Shaykhun, the use of chemical weapons against civilians has again been reported in the town of Duma in the Syrian Arab Republic. The prohibition on the use of chemical weapons is absolute under international law, thus making any use of such weapons under any circumstances a war crime in situations where international humanitarian law applies. In accordance with the Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, we request all members of the Security Council to finally act against the atrocity crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic, including by condemning the recent use of chemical weapons in Duma and ensuring that those responsible are held accountable.

We would like to remind all Security Council members that 115 States (including 9 current members of the Council) have endorsed the Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as elaborated by the ACT Group. These 115 States expect the Council to take timely and decisive action aimed at preventing such atrocities and not to vote against credible draft resolutions to the same end.

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jürg **Lauber**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

[1] Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Uruguay.

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United Nations S/2018/478

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 May 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 17 May 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit the attached communication, dated 15 May 2018, which I received from the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see annex). The letter transmits the note by the OPCW Technical Secretariat on the report of the OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic regarding an alleged incident in Saraqib on 4 February 2018.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

18-08210 (E) 240518

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Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you the note by the Technical Secretariat entitled "Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission regarding an Alleged Incident in Saraqib, Syrian Arab Republic, on 4 February 2018" (see enclosure).

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

REPORT OF THE OPCW FACT-FINDING MISSION IN SYRIA REGARDING AN ALLEGED INCIDENT IN SARAQIB, SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC ON 4 FEBRUARY 2018

1. SUMMARY

1.1 On the morning of 5 February 2018, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) became aware of allegations of use of a toxic chemical as a weapon in Saraqib, Idlib Governorate. The FFM assessed the credibility of the allegations based on information collected from open sources and information received from several non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

1.2 The FFM interviewed a variety of witnesses including casualties, health workers, and first responders. The team also received environmental samples, which had been collected from the incident location.

1.3 The conclusions of the FFM were derived from the analysis of interviews, supporting material submitted during the interview process, analysis of environmental samples, and subsequent cross-referencing and corroboration of evidence.

1.4 The FFM determined that chlorine, released from cylinders through mechanical impact, was likely used as a chemical weapon on 4 February 2018 in the Al Talil neighbourhood of Saraqib. This conclusion is based on:

(a) the presence of two cylinders, which were determined by the FFM as previously containing chlorine;

(b) the testimony of witnesses, who identified the cylinders as impacting the location on 4 February 2018;

(c) environmental analyses, demonstrating the unusual presence of chlorine in the local environment; and

(d) a number of patients who presented for treatment at medical facilities shortly after the incident, and showed signs and symptoms of irritation of tissue, which were consistent with exposure to chlorine and other toxic chemicals.

1.5 The FFM also noted the presence of chemicals that can neither be explained as occurring naturally in the environment nor as being related to chlorine. Furthermore, some of the medical signs and symptoms reported were different to those that would be expected from exposure to pure chlorine. There was insufficient information and evidence to enable the FFM to draw any further conclusions on these chemicals at this stage.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The FFM was set up in May 2014 "to establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic" on the basis of the Director-General's authority under the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter "the Convention") to seek to uphold at all times the object and purpose of the Convention, as reinforced by the relevant decisions of the OPCW Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council").

2.2 The terms of reference of the FFM were mutually agreed upon by the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic through the exchange of letters between the OPCW Director-General and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, dated 1 and 10 May 2014, respectively (Annex to the Note by the Technical Secretariat S/1255/2015*, dated 10 March 2015).

2.3 The continuation of the FFM was subsequently endorsed by the Council in decision EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015, as recalled by United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), and subsequently decision EC-M-50/DEC.1, dated 23 November 2015. Both of these Council decisions and resolution 2209 (2015) require the FFM to study all available information relating to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, including that provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and by others.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The FFM followed the same methodology that had been used in previous missions. This methodology has been comprehensively described in previous reports and therefore will not be repeated in detail here.

3.2 While the overarching methodology has been consistently applied in establishing facts related to the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria, there is a unique set of circumstances presented by each allegation. These circumstances include access to physical evidence, electronic evidence, witnesses, and documentation, in addition to evaluating the time lag between the allegation and such access. As such, the differing circumstances of each allegation assign lesser or greater relevance to the various components of the detailed methodology.

3.3 In particular, the evidentiary value of samples taken close to the time of the allegation, supported by photographic and video evidence and in association with witness testimony, was balanced against the evidentiary value of the FFM visiting the site some time later to collect its own samples.

3.4 Accordingly, the FFM reviewed and compared the methodology applied in reports S/1318/2015.Rev.1 (dated 17 December 2015) and Add.1 (dated 29 February 2016), S/1319/2015 and S/1320/2015 (both dated 29 October 2015), S/1444/2016 (dated 21 December 2016), S/1491/2017 (dated 1 May 2017), S/1510/2017 (dated 29 June 2017) and S/1548/2017 (dated 2 November 2017) to ensure that, with respect to previous allegations, there was a consistent application of the investigative approach.

3.5 The FFM looked at the combination, consistency, and corroboration of the information gathered as a whole in order to reach its conclusions.

3.6 Reference documentation is listed in Annex 1 to this report.

4. DEPLOYMENT DETAILS AND CHRONOLOGY

Pre-deployment

4.1 Based on information gathered from open-source media, the Information Cell alerted the Office of the Director-General of the alleged use of chlorine in an eastern neighbourhood of the city of Saraqib on 4 February 2018.

4.2 The FFM obtained further information from NGOs and by carrying out an expanded search of open sources. Open-source information is listed in Annex 2 to this report. Subsequently, the FFM expanded its search for potential interviewees and evidence in regard to this allegation.

4.3 The FFM noted that during an investigation, complete, direct, and immediate access to the site of an allegation provides the greatest opportunity to collect information. As with all the allegations and incidents referenced in previous reports of the FFM (see paragraph 3.4 above), various constraints, mainly related to security, have not enabled immediate access to sites by the FFM.

4.4 Given that those constraints prevented a team deployment to the location of the alleged incident, the FFM determined that the principal methods for collecting and evaluating the credibility of information include the following: examination of existing reports; assessment and corroboration of background information; conduct of interviews with relevant medical care providers, alleged casualties, and other individuals linked to the reported incident; review of documentation and records provided by interviewees; analysis of the signs and symptoms of victims as reported by interviewees; and receipt of environmental samples, for subsequent analysis.

4.5 The FFM team identified relevant witnesses through open-source research and medical records provided to the team. Access to witnesses was coordinated with NGOs.

4.6 Through liaison with representatives of several NGOs, including Same Justice/Chemical Violations Documentation Center of Syria (CVDCS), the Syrian Civil Defence - also known as White Helmets - (SCD) and the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), the FFM contacted witnesses and confirmed their willingness to provide testimony and potential evidence. Furthermore, the FFM coordinated with the NGOs to organise movement of the witnesses.

4.7 The evidentiary value of samples taken close to the time of the allegation, supported by photographic and video evidence and in association with witness testimony, was balanced against the evidentiary value of the FFM visiting the site, if accessible sometime later, to collect its own samples.

Deployment activities

4.8 The FFM held its first interview with respect to allegation in Saraqib on 14 February 2018. Interviews continued until 4 March 2018.

4.9 Environmental samples relating to the allegation of 4 February 2018 were collected by an NGO on 5 February 2018 and were received by the FFM team on 19 February 2018. The samples were prepared for transport and delivered to the OPCW Laboratory on 27 February 2018.

4.10 Information related to the samples is contained in Section 5 below and in Annex 3 to this report. At the time of handover, the NGO that delivered the samples to the FFM confirmed that it had collected those samples. Representatives of the NGO who were involved in the sample collection process were also interviewed. They provided photographs and videos from the site of the allegation, including the sampling process itself.

4.11 From the moment of their receipt by the team, all samples were handled in accordance with applicable OPCW procedures, including the application of seals by the FFM team. The samples were analysed by two OPCW designated laboratories, and the results are presented in Section 5 below.

5. INCIDENT SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

5.1 The narratives below are derived solely from interviews and, where possible, corroborated with different interviewees and evidence gathered by the team.

5.2 Owing to concerns raised by some of the witnesses, the facility that provided medical treatment is, for reporting purposes herein, generically referred to as the "medical facility" (MF).

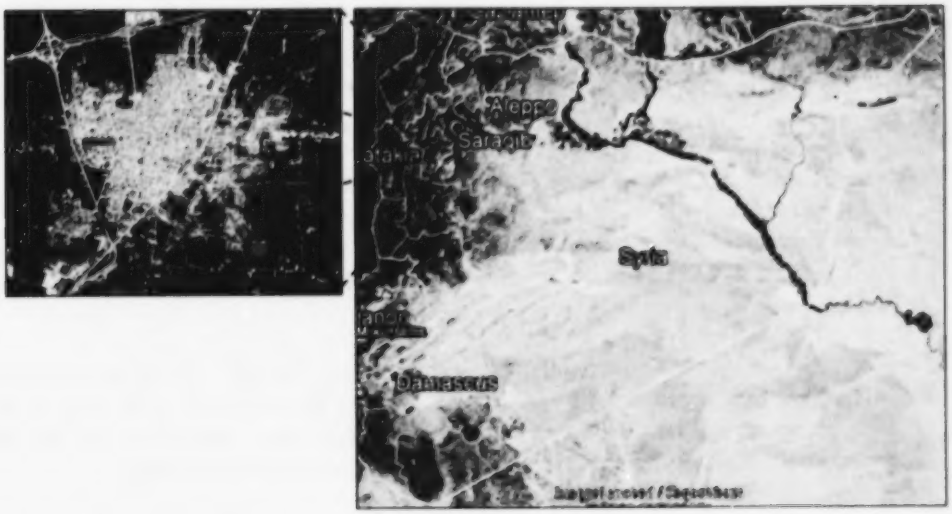
Saraqib

5.3 Saraqib is a city in the Idlib Governorate of the Syrian Arab Republic. It is located approximately 20 km south-east of Idlib and 50 km south-west of Aleppo on the Damascus–Aleppo highway (M5). Prior to the conflict (based on figures from the 2004 census), the population of the city and the surrounding district was approximately 34,000 people.

5.4 In February 2018, at the time of the allegation, the city was not under government control.

5.5 Figure 1 below shows the location of Saraqib.

FIGURE 1: LOCATION OF SARAQIB IN SYRIA



5.6 The meteorological conditions on 4 February 2018 around the time of the alleged incident, as registered in open sources (worldweatheronline.com), are indicated in Table 1 below. The description of weather conditions by witnesses is consistent with data recorded by several meteorological websites. The air movement in the field is likely to have been affected by the shape of the depression and by building structures surrounding the open field.

TABLE 1: METEOROLOGICAL CONDITIONS IN SARAQIB ON 4 FEBRUARY 2018

Time	Temperature	Wind Direction	Wind Speed	Precipitation	Clouds	Humidity
21:00	15°C	From SE	4 km/h	0.0 mm	80%	54%

5.7 Between 14 February and 4 March 2018, the FFM interviewed 19 people in person, including doctors, patients and first responders. Two of the interviewees were involved in the environmental sample collection process. All interviewees were male.

TABLE 2: DETAILS OF INTERVIEWEES

	Interviewee	Male	Female	Primary Casualty	Secondary Casualty
Treating physicians	2	2	0	0	0
Medical support staff	4	4	0	0	0
Witness	11	11	0	11	0
Sampler	2	2	0	0	0
Total	**19**	**19**	**0**	**11**	**0**

4 February 2018 – Narrative

5.8 Witnesses described the night of 4 February 2018 as cold with no precipitation and virtually no wind. There was poor visibility due to low ambient light, and restricted use of artificial light due to fear of being targeted by aircraft.

5.9 At approximately 21:00, eight men were taking shelter in a basement in the eastern neighbourhood of Al Talil in the city of Saraqib when they heard a notification via radio from a spotter that a helicopter had entered the airspace of Saraqib from the south-east. At approximately 21:15, witnesses reported hearing a helicopter flying above the city and the sound of two "barrels" falling and impacting in close proximity to their location. They also indicated not hearing any explosion.

5.10 According to witness statements, two cylinders (or "barrels" according to most witnesses) fell in an open field surrounded by building structures approximately 200 metres to the south-west of the Agricultural Bank in the eastern part of Saraqib (see Figure 3 below), and 50 to 100 metres to the south-west of the basement mentioned in paragraph 5.9 above.

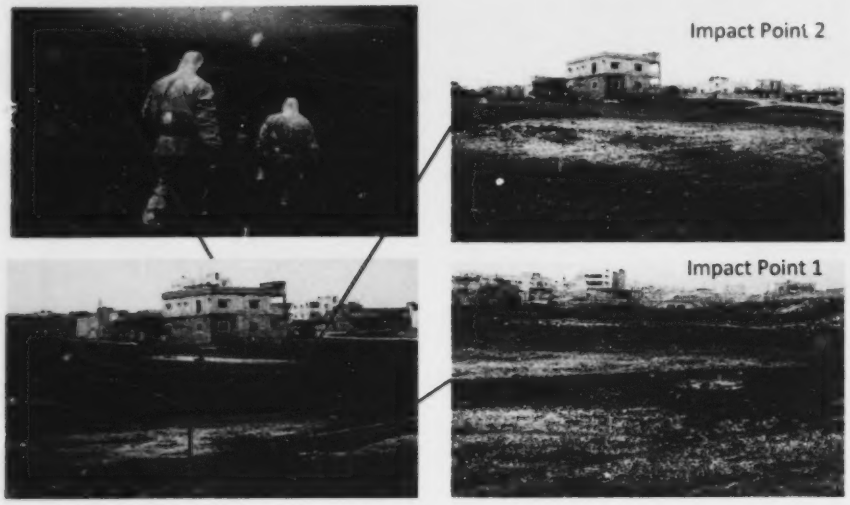
5.11 Both impact points were in this open field approximately 200 x 200 metres in size, which is in a depression 3 to 4 metres lower than the surrounding urbanised area. The impact locations, as given by witnesses, are shown in Figure 3 below. The initiation points were within a short distance and short time frame from one another. The FFM was unable to determine the chronological order of impact of the two cylinders; as such, they are numbered Impact Point 1 and Impact Point 2 for referencing purposes only.

5.12 Figures 2, 3, and 4 below show the location of the alleged incident in Saraqib, the impact points, and the basement where the eight men had taken shelter. The impact points were identified based on the analysis of the information gathered by the FFM from different sources, including witnesses.

FIGURE 2: SARAQIB AND THE ALLEGED INCIDENT LOCATION

FIGURE 3: LOCATION OF ALLEGED IMPACT POINTS

FIGURE 4: PANORAMIC VIEW OFTHE ALLEGED IMPACT POINTS



5.13 Since no explosion was heard, one occupant exited the basement a few minutes after impact to assess the situation. He returned to basement and reported an odour of chlorine. Shortly afterwards, he lost consciousness. The remaining occupants in the basement shelter reported a pungent odour and immediately developed shortness of breath, nausea, and a burning sensation in the eyes. Some of them reported losing consciousness.

5.14 Witnesses described the odour as similar to household cleaning products, such as the local commercial brands "Clor" and "Flash", or bleach. They added that the odour was stronger than these products.

5.15 Witnesses reported being notified of the possible use of toxic gases and were advised to go to higher ground. They headed to the rooftop of an adjacent building. On the way upstairs, a few of them lost consciousness and others struggled to reach the roof. They reported helping each other climb the stairs and using cloths to cover their mouth and nose. They also reported calling for rescue via a hand-held radio.

5.16 First responders indicated that following the notification of the possible use of toxic gases, the SCD and other ambulance teams received information via radio that a helicopter was flying over the eastern neighbourhood. Approximately five minutes after receiving the notification, they arrived at the site of the incident.

5.17 The first responders reported being directed via radio towards an open field located in the eastern neighbourhood of Saraqib, in Al Talil, approximately 400 metres to the east of the Abu Adh Dhuhur Bridge (located on the Damascus–Aleppo Highway) and to the south of the Agricultural Bank.

5.18 The first team of three SCD rescuers arrived at the site. The first rescuer stepped out of the vehicle felt a strange smell and immediately covered his nose and mouth with a paper mask; but had difficulty breathing and lost consciousness. While en route to the medical point, other team members reported developing similar symptoms.

5.19 Other teams responded to the site and found casualties presenting with difficulty breathing and disorientation. They stated that they administered oxygen and transported the casualties to the MF.

5.20 Upon arrival at the MF, the casualties were undressed and washed with water by the SCD before entering. Two of the casualties required assistance to enter the facility.

5.21 Treating medical personnel reported the arrival of 11 adult male casualties in the span of 45 to 60 minutes, starting at 21:45. They were brought by SCD rescue cars and other ambulances. Patients displayed nausea, eye irritation, and excessive secretions. They also presented with shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, and crepitus during auscultation. Medical personnel reported the absence of any signs of external trauma.

5.22 Three of the eleven casualties belonged to SCD rescue teams, and the remaining eight were those who had initially taken shelter in the basement. No secondary exposure was reported.

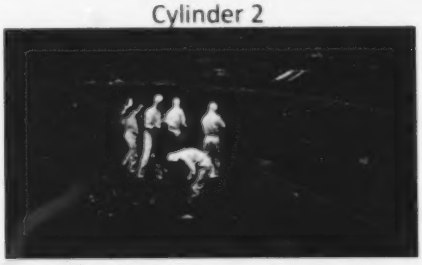
5.23 Witnesses described how samples were collected in relation to the two "barrels" in the early hours of 5 February 2018 by the SCD sample collection team. Samples included soil, grass, and wipes taken from the "barrel" and from different points in the area of the alleged chemical incident. Samples were later delivered to the FFM (see Figure 5 below).

5.24 A change of colour of the vegetation around the impact points was reported with some witnesses indicating that the grass appeared "burned" and/or "dry".

FIGURE 5: SAMPLING PROCESS

Sampling Cylinder 1

Sampling Cylinder 2



4 February 2018 – Epidemiological analysis

5.25 The team interviewed two physicians, four medical support staff, six rescuers, three of whom were also affected, one spotter, one media operator, one sampler, and four other affected people.

5.26 While the sampler and media operator were not at the site at the time of the alleged incident, they were able to provide the means of cross-checking and corroborating contextual and geographic information.

5.27 The number of causalities reported in medical records was 11, all male 10 of whom were aged between 20 and 40 and one who was in his fifties. Complaints, treatment, and disposition were obtained from the witnesses themselves and by physicians and from patient records from the MF.

Information gathered from medical personnel

5.28 Casualties presented with an odour of chlorine on their clothing and were undressed and washed with water prior to entering the MF. Initial treatment was provided by nurses.

5.29 Admission records documented that eight patients presented with mild signs and symptoms and three presented with moderate symptoms; none presented severe signs and symptoms. Physicians described, from memory, nine ambulatory patients presenting with mild signs and symptoms of exposure, while two other patients presented with moderate signs and symptoms, displaying an altered mental state that required them to be assisted.

5.30 The FFM attributed the difference between testimony and records as a lapse of memory with respect to detail and assigned greater credibility to the documented numbers. These are the numbers indicated in Figure 7 below.

5.31 Patients displayed nausea, eye irritation, expectoration, and excessive secretions. They also presented with shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, and crepitus during auscultation. Gastrointestinal signs and symptoms included nausea and, in some cases, vomiting. Casualties were also described as presenting with constricted pupils.

5.32 Medical personnel reported the absence of any signs of external trauma.

5.33 All cases were treated with oxygen, salbutamol, hydrocortisone, metoclopramide, atropine, ranitidine, and meclizine. In the case of two moderate presentations, midazolam was administered for agitation. Administration of nebulised sodium bicarbonate and lidocaine was also reported by nursing staff, but the number of patients receiving the treatment was non-specific.

5.34 No chest X-rays were performed on any of the casualties.

5.35 Nine casualties were discharged within two hours of arrival, while two others needed approximately two hours of treatment and observation before being discharged.

5.36 No biomedical samples were taken.

Onset in relation to the alleged incident

5.37 Most of the signs and symptoms presented were consistent with exposure to an irritant gas.

FIGURE 6: PATIENT PRESENTATION AT MF

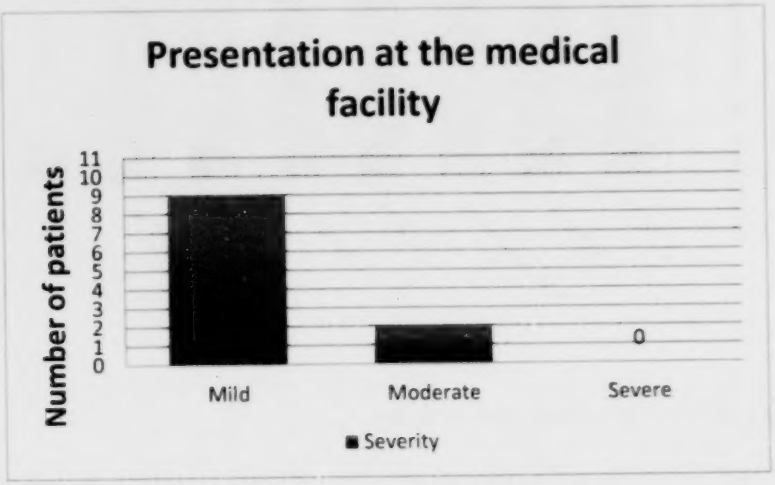


FIGURE 7: SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

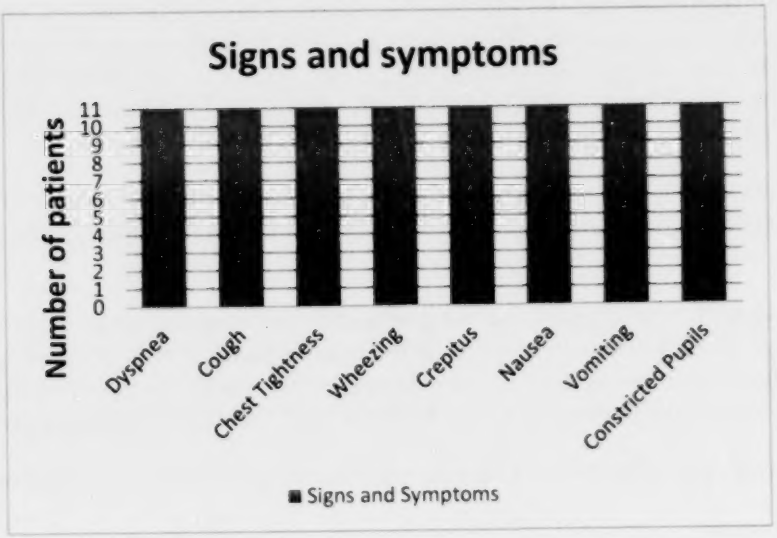
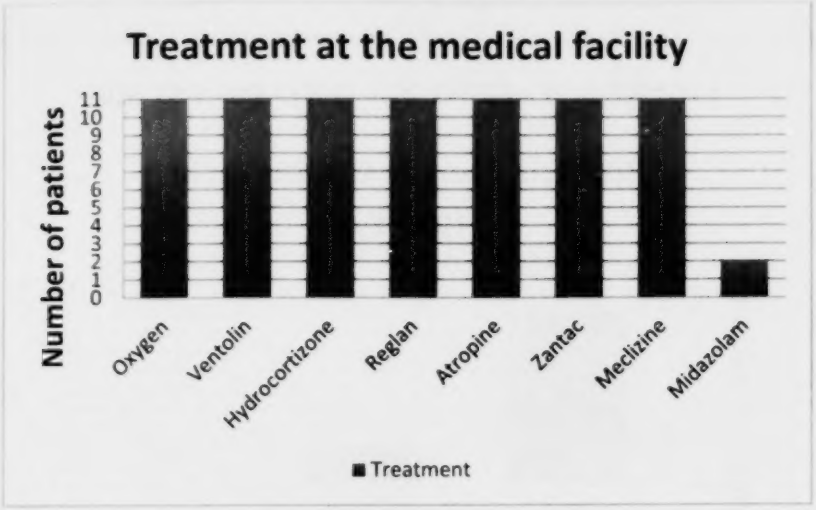


FIGURE 8: TREATMENT AT MF



4 February 2018 – Environmental samples

5.38 On 19 February 2018, the FFM received soil and vegetation samples, as well as metal objects.

5.39 At the time of handover, the team was informed that all samples had been taken by the SCD on 5 February 2018. Two members involved in the sample collection process were present at the handover and provided information on every sample. This information was supported by interviewing one sampler and one media operator, who was responsible for documenting the sampling process. Photos and videos were delivered to the FFM team and the methodology of sampling and documenting was described during interviews.

5.40 Additionally, the FFM examined the two cylinders allegedly used in the incident for the delivery and dispersion of chemicals, and collected their own samples from the cylinders on 19 February 2018.

5.41 On reviewing the photographs and video related to the sampling process, the FFM noted that the original location of Cylinder 1 was different to its location at the time of sampling. Hence, samples that refer to Impact Point 1 were taken from the final resting point of the cylinder rather than from its original impact point. The FFM clarified these details during interviews.

5.42 Samples were split at the OPCW Laboratory before being transported to designated laboratories.

Cylinder analysis

5.43 The items were made of metal and yellow paint was still visible on them. They were significantly deformed and displayed signs of physical damage, including rupture. Rust was also visible and present to a greater degree on the upper and inner surfaces of the items.

5.44 The shape and the markings on the containers were consistent with common industrial liquefied gas cylinders.

5.45 The total length (height) of each cylinder was approximately 1,400 mm, with a base diameter of approximately 330 mm and cylinder body diameter of 350 mm.

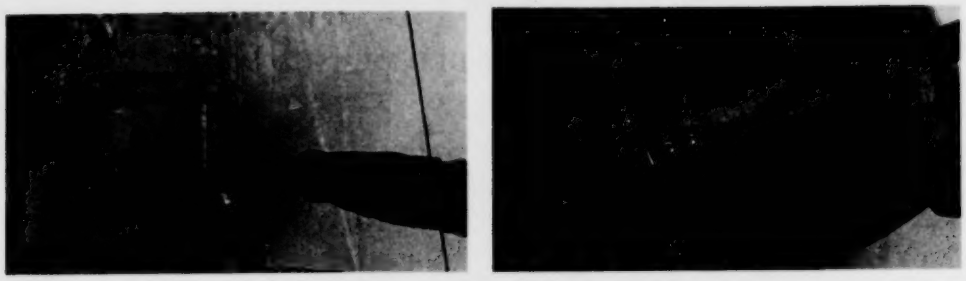
FIGURE 9: CYLINDER MEASUREMENTS

5.46 The cylinders were made of metal with a wall thickness of approximately 6 mm. The body was made of a rectangular sheet formed and welded into a cylindrical shape, with additional parts welded to each end. Inside of the cylinder, there was a metal bar welded transversally inside the cylinder. The metal bar was approximately 50 mm wide with a hole in the middle and a diameter of approximately 30 mm.

FIGURE 10: INSIDE VIEW OF THE CYLINDER

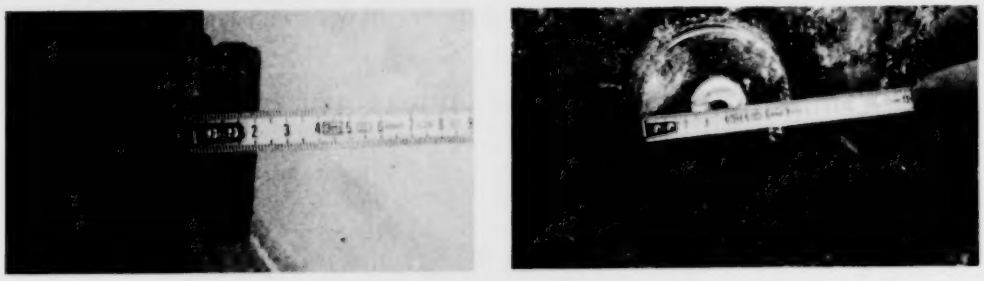
5.47 A support ring was welded to the external base of the cylinder. The diameter of the base ring was 330 mm and the height approximately 100 mm. The four holes present at the base had a diameter of approximately 30 mm.

FIGURE 11: CYLINDER BASE



5.48 At the top of each cylinder, the valve well was still visible with dimensions of approximately 70 mm in diameter and 20 mm in height.

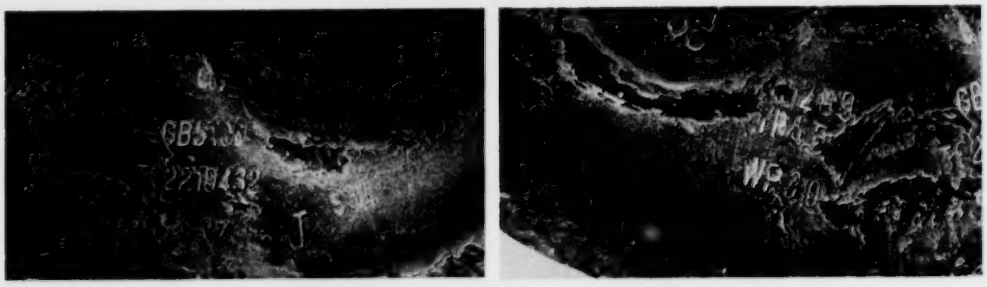
FIGURE 12: TOP OF THE CYLINDER



5.49 Cylinder capacity was estimated as being between 100 and 120 litres.

5.50 At the top part of both cylinders stamped markings were still visible. Among the various stamps was the alphanumeric CL_2.

FIGURE 13: CYLINDER MARKINGS



5.51 The top of each cylinder was ruptured, one more so than the other. The ruptures do not appear to have been caused by an explosive charge and were most likely caused by significant mechanical force on the body of a pressurised container.

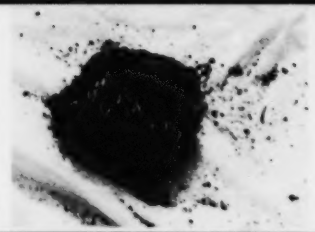
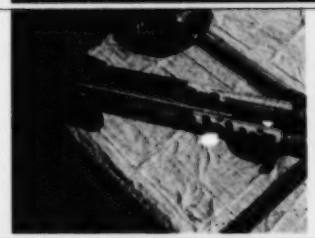
5.52 One of the cylinders also had an additional structure attached to its side. The attachment comprised metal rings, tubes and flat sheets of metal were visible but significantly deformed and covered with rust.

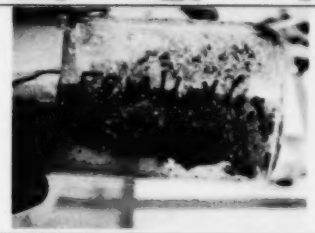
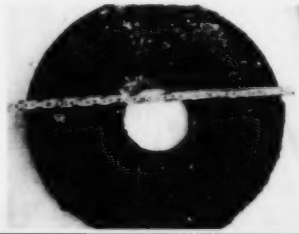
FIGURE 14: VISIBLE DAMAGE AND ADDITIONAL STRUCTURE ATTACHED TO ONE CYLINDER

5.53 Tables 3, 4, and 5 below list the samples received by the FFM and the subsequent analysis results. Table 6 gives results of analyses performed on vegetation samples and summarises experiments performed on grass by one of the designated laboratories.

TABLE 3: SAMPLES RECEIVED AND COLLECTED BY THE FACT-FINDING MISSION

	Report Ref	Evidence No.	Sample Code	Description	Picture
Impact Point 1	1.	20180219172332	FFM/47/18/WPS32	H_2O wipe from cylinder 1 collected by the FFM team	
	2.	20180219172306	FFM/47/18/WPS06	Wipe from inside cylinder 1	
	3.	20180219172303	FFM/47/18/SLS03	Soil near cylinder 1	
	4.	20180219172304	FFM/47/18/SLS04	Soil near cylinder 1	

	Report Ref	Evidence No.	Sample Code	Description	Picture
	5.	20180219172305	FFM/47/18/SLS05	Vegetation and soil at 5 m from the final resting point of cylinder 1	
	6.	20180219172302	FFM/47/18/SLS02	Soil at 50 m from the final resting point of cylinder 1	
Impact Point 2	7.	20180219172333	FFM/47/18/WPS33	H_2O wipe from cylinder 2 collected by the FFM team	
	8.	20180219172307	FFM/47/18/WPS07	Wipe from inside cylinder 2	

Report Ref	Evidence No.	Sample Code	Description	Picture
9.	20180219172309	FFM/47/18/SLS09	Soil from the crater of cylinder 2 under a metal piece	
10.	20180219172308	FFM/47/18/SLS08	Soil from crater of cylinder 2	
11.	20180219172310	FFM/47/18/SLS10	Soil from crater of cylinder 2	
12.	20180219172312	FFM/47/18/SDS12	Metal piece from crater of cylinder 2	

Report Ref	Evidence No.	Sample Code	Description	Picture
13.	20180219172311	FFM/47/18/SLS11	Soil at 50 m from crater of cylinder 2	
14.	20180219172301	FFM/47/18/SLS01	Grass at 10 m from cylinder 2	

TABLE 4: ANALYTICAL RESULTS FROM DESIGNATED LABORATORIES FOR ORGANIC COMPOUNDS

Report Ref	Description	Results DL2 Organic Compound(s)	Results DL3 Organic Compound(s)
1.	H_2O wipe from cylinder 1 collected by the FFM team	Tris(chloropropyl)phosphate (trace level)	Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA
2.	Wipe from inside cylinder 1	Chloroacetic acid Dichloroacetic acid	
3.	Soil near cylinder 1	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate (trace level) Dichloroacetic acid Isopropyl methylphosphonate (trace level)	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA Methylphosphonic acid / MPA
4.	Soil near cylinder 1	Chloroacetic acid Diisopropyl methylphosphonate (trace level) Tetrachlorobenzene (trace level) Bis(dichloropropyl) ether (trace level)	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP Methylphosphonic acid / MPA
5.	Vegetation and soil at 5 m from the final resting point of cylinder 1	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate (trace level) Chloromethylphenol (trace level) Dichloromethoxybenzene (trace level)	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP
6.	Soil at 50 m from the final resting point of cylinder 1	Bis(dichloropropyl)ether (trace level) Diisopropyl methylphosphonate (trace level)	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA Methylphosphonic acid / MPA
7.	H_2O wipe from cylinder 2 collected by the FFM team	Pyrophosphoric acid Tris(chloropropyl)phosphate (trace level)	Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA
8.	Wipe from inside cylinder 2	Dichloroacetic acid	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT
9.	Soil from the crater of cylinder 2 under a metal piece	Chloral hydrate 2,4-Dichlorophenol Trichloroacetic acid Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT
10	Soil from crater of cylinder 2	2,2,2-Trichloroethanol Trichloroacetic acid Chloroacetic acid 2,4-Dinitrotoluene 4-Amino-2,6-dinitrotoluene 2-Amino-4,6-dinitrotoluene 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT

Report Ref	Description	Results DL2 Organic Compound(s)	Results DL3 Organic Compound(s)
11.	Soil from the crater of cylinder 2	Chloral hydrate Chloroacetic acid Trichloroacetic acid 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT
12.	Metal piece from the crater of cylinder 2	Chloroacetic acid 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT (trace level)	Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT
13.	Soil at 50 m from crater of cylinder 2	2,2,2-Trichloroethanol 2,4,6-Trinitrotoluene / TNT Diisopropyl methylphosphonate (trace level)	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate / DIMP Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA
14.	Grass at 10 m from cylinder 2	2,4,6-Trichlorophenol Tetrachloroethane (trace level) Dichloromethoxybenzene (trace level) Dichloroacetic acid Trichloroacetic acid (trace level)	Isopropyl methylphosphonate / IPMPA

TABLE 5: ANALYTICAL RESULTS FROM DESIGNATED LABORATORIES FOR ANIONS AND CATIONS

Report Ref	Sample Description	Concentration in ppm Cl^-	F^-	NO_2^-	Br^-	NO_3^-	PO_4^{3-}	SO_4^{2-}	K^+	Ca^{2+}	Li^+	Na^+	NH_4^+	Mg^{2+}
1.	H_2O wipe from cylinder 1 collected by the FFM team	73	<1.2	20	<8	120	<8.9	120	<11	65	<1.4	100	21	<1.8
2.	Wipe from inside cylinder 1	15000	<2.4	<3.2	<16	230	<18	<18	N.D	540	<2.8	380	30	<3.6
3.	Soil near cylinder 1	170	20	20	<8	130	<8.9	130	<11	130	<1.4	120	26	<1.8
4.	Soil near cylinder 1	170	19	21	<8	140	<8.9	130	35	120	<1.4	120	26	<1.8
5.	Vegetation and soil at 5m from the final resting point of cylinder 1	170	20	20	<8	120	<8.9	140	87	97	<1.4	110	52	<1.8

Report Ref	Sample Description	Cl	F	NO_2	Br	NO_3	PO_4^{3-}	SO_4^{2-}	K^+	Ca^{2+}	Li^+	Na^+	NH_4^+	Mg^{2+}
6.	Soil at 50 m from the final resting point of cylinder 1	190	18	20	<8	120	<8.9	130	35	140	<1.4	110	32	9
7.	H_2O wipe from cylinder 2 collected by the FFM team	75	<1.2	20	<8	<7.2	<8.9	120	<11	45	<1.4	110	21	11
8.	Wipe from inside cylinder 2	320	2.4	35	<16	230	<18	260	<21	34	<2.8	280	12	<3.6
9.	Soil from the crater of cylinder 2 under a metal piece	14000	<1.2	<1.6	100	140	<8.9	130	770	7400	<1.4	140	52	46
10.	Soil from crater of cylinder 2	2000	18	20	<8	130	<8.9	140	960	590	<1.4	130	46	<1.8
11.	Soil from the crater of cylinder 2	4200	<1.2	17	570	130	<8.9	130	680	2200	2	86	34	7
12.	Metal piece from the crater of cylinder 2	1100	<1.2	19	<8	120	<8.9	120	25	580	<1.4	91	22	22
13.	Soil at 50 m from crater of cylinder 2	780	<1.2	17	<8	110	<8.9	140	600	200	<1.4	48	18	8
14.	Grass at 10 m from cylinder 2	22000	61	29	14	140	970	1400	27000	850	<1.4	620	780	310
A01	System Blank	71	<1.2	20	<8	130	<8.9	120	<11	<15	1.4	110	20	1.8
A06	Dry Wipe (Blank)	71	19	22	<8	120	<8.9	120	<11	<15	<1.4	150	21	<1.8
A07	System Blank (H_2O)	69	<1.2	20	<8	120	<8.9	<9.1	<11	<15	<1.4	81	16	<1.8

TABLE 6: CHLORINE GAS EXPOSURE EXPERIMENTS AND RESULTS ON VEGETATION SAMPLES

Report Ref	Sample Description	Concentration in ppm												
		Cl^-	F^-	NO_2^-	Br^-	NO_3^-	PO_4^{3-}	SO_4^{2-}	K^+	Ca^{2+}	Li^+	Na^+	NH_4^+	Mg^{2+}
A01	System Blank (D_2O)	71	1.2	20	8	130	8.9	120	11	15	1.4	110	20	1.8
A02	Neg Control: D_2O-Extract Grass	200	21	1.6	8	7.2	8.9	120	140	27	1.4	110	6	1.8
A03	Pos. Control: D_2O-Extract Cl_2 exposed Grass	18000	88	1.5	81	150	370	1400	2500	2300	3	230	78	250
14	**Grass at 10 m from Cylinder 2**	**22000**	**61**	**29**	**14**	**140**	**970**	**1400**	**27000**	**850**	**1.4**	**620**	**780**	**310**
	Conc. Ratio [A03] / [A02]	90	4	1	10	21	42	12	18	85	2	2	13	139
	Conc. Ratio [14] / [A02]	110	3	18	2	19	109	12	193	31	1	6	130	172

A02: Deuterium oxide (D_2O) extract of a grass **not exposed** to chlorine gas.

A03: Deuterium oxide (D_2O) extract of a grass **exposed** to chlorine gas.

14: Sample received by FFM team

Conc.: Concentration

5.54 Laboratory analysis related to the cylinder itself shows the presence of chloride along with anions typically associated with material of construction of industrial cylinders. This, coupled with the absence of other chemicals, enabled the FFM to determine that the cylinders had been previously used for the storage of chlorine.

5.55 Some other samples, particularly the soil samples, indicate the presence of chloride, bromide, potassium, and ammonium ions at elevated concentrations, which would not necessarily be expected as occurring naturally in the local environment. The FFM also noted the presence of high levels of calcium ions and lower levels of magnesium.

5.56 The variations in concentration and ratios of potassium and ammonium are consistent with the use of fertiliser, the presence of which would be expected.

5.57 In the raw material for the production of chlorine, bromide is an expected contaminant that is not always removed in the production process. This bromine/bromide is often present in downstream products, and therefore could be expected to be present, at significantly lower concentrations, whenever chlorine/chloride is detected.

5.58 Limestone is a common building material that also forms the bedrock of the area. As such, calcium would be expected to be prevalent in all soil samples. This explains the high levels found in some samples, along with magnesium, which is commonly found to a lesser extent in natural limestone formations.

5.59 Organic analysis of samples indicates the presence of chlorinated compounds. A number, but not all, of these compounds are plasticisers or flame retardants. However, the number of such compounds in a location where such a variety of chlorinated compounds would not be expected is a strong indicator that they were more likely produced by chlorination of compounds, which would be more likely to be present with chlorine.

5.60 The concentrations of chloride in the environmental samples are at concentrations above those which would occur naturally and would have any longevity. Aside from external factors recently increasing the concentration of chloride locally, these levels cannot otherwise be explained.

6. EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

6.1 The Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") addressed Note Verbale NV/ODG/214066/18 on 6 March 2018 to the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the FFM activities concerning an alleged incident involving the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in Saraqib, Idlib, the Syrian Arab Republic, on 4 February 2018, and requested that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic provide any information and materials it may have in relation to the reported incident.

6.2 The Syrian Arab Republic replied with a three-page summary report attached to classified Note Verbale No. 23 dated 12 March 2018. In this summary report, the Syrian Arab Republic shared with the Secretariat the following:

(a) Saraqib had not been under the control of the Syrian Government for a long period of time, including the time of the incident; and

(b) a technical analysis of the alleged incident based on open-source media.

6.3 The Secretariat replied with Note Verbale NV/ODG/214203/18 on 14 March 2018 requesting additional supporting information.

6.4 At the time of writing, the Secretariat had not received the requested additional supporting information.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 As with other allegations investigated by the FFM, the team was not able to visit a secured site immediately after the alleged incident. The potential for access was made more difficult as the area was predominantly a military area with ongoing conflict prior to the alleged incident, through to the time at which this report was being drafted. The team therefore relied on the testimony of interviewees, samples as made available by the interviewees, and limited hospital records.

7.2 The FFM had limited access to associated medical records and was unable to visit hospitals that may have admitted patients. Interviewees gave a consistent narrative of the incident, the reported medical signs and symptoms, and the way samples were collected. The FFM was able to place witnesses at the site at the time and correlate their medical assessment. Based on these factors, the FFM determined that 11 people displayed medical signs and symptoms associated with exposure to a chemical that primarily irritates tissue such as eyes, nose, throat, and lungs.

7.3 Through interviews and review of video evidence supplied at interview, the FFM was able to determine that environmental samples, including cylinders, were retrieved from the site of the allegation.

7.4 The FFM determined that chlorine, released from cylinders through mechanical impact, was likely used as a chemical weapon on 4 February 2018 in the Al Talil neighbourhood of Saraqib. This conclusion is based on:

(a) the presence of two cylinders, which were determined by the FFM as previously containing chlorine;

(b) the testimony of witnesses, who identified the cylinders as impacting the location on 4 February 2018;

(c) environmental analyses, demonstrating the unusual presence of chlorine in the local environment; and

(d) a number of patients who presented for treatment at medical facilities shortly after the incident, and showed signs and symptoms of irritation of tissue, which were consistent with exposure to chlorine and other toxic chemicals.

7.5 The FFM also noted the presence of chemicals that can neither be explained as occurring naturally in the environment nor as being related to chlorine. Furthermore, some of the medical signs and symptoms reported were different to those that would be expected from exposure to pure chlorine. There was insufficient information and evidence to enable the FFM to draw any further conclusions on these chemicals at this stage.

Annexes (English only):

Annex 1: Reference Documentation
Annex 2: Open Sources
Annex 3: Information Obtained by the Fact-Finding Mission

Annex 1

REFERENCE DOCUMENTATION

	Document Reference	Full title of Document
1.	QDOC/INS/SOP/IAU01 (Issue 1, Revision 1)	Standard Operating Procedure for Evidence Collection, Documentation, Chain-of-Custody and Preservation during an Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons
2.	QDOC/INS/WI/IAU05 (Issue 1, Revision 2)	Work Instruction for Conducting Interviews during an Investigation of Alleged Use
3.	QDOC/INS/SOP/IAU02 (Issue 1, Revision 0)	Standard Operating Procedure Investigation of Alleged Use (IAU) Operations
4.	QDOC/INS/SOP/GG011 (Issue 1, Revision 0)	Standard Operating Procedure for Managing Inspection Laptops and other Confidentiality Support Materials
5.	QDOC/LAB/SOP/OSA2 (Issue 1, Revision 2)	Standard Operating Procedure for Off-Site Analysis of Authentic Samples
6.	QDOC/LAB/WI/CS01 (Issue 1, Revision 2)	Work Instruction for Handling of Authentic Samples from Inspection Sites and Packing Off-Site Samples at the OPCW Laboratory
7.	QDOC/LAB/WI/OSA3 (Issue 2, Revision 1)	The chain of custody and documentation for OPCW samples on-site
8.	QDOC/LAB/WI/OSA4 (Issue 1, Revision 3)	Work Instruction for Packing of Off-Site Samples

Annex 2

OPEN SOURCES

Open source internet links related to the Al Ltamenah incident
• https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/syria/syrian-civilians-hit-by-chlorine-gas-attack-activists-say-1.5788942https://syria.liveuamap.com/en/2018/4-february-saraqeb-syriacivildef-teams-respond-to-an-attack
• https://twitter.com/SyriaCivilDef/status/960261610454618113
• http://aa.com.tr/en/vg/video-gallery/syrian-regime-continues-to-use-allegedly-chlorine-gas-in-idlib/0
• http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05x40s4?ocid=socialflow_twitter
• http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42944033
• http://www.dailyjournal.net/2018/02/04/ml-syria-gas-attack/
• http://www.metronews.ca/news/world/2018/02/04/syrian-activists-say-civilians-hit-by-chlorine-gas-attack.html
• http://www.rudaw.net/mobile/english/middleeast/syria/05022018
• http://www.scmp.com/news/world/middle-east/article/2132217/carnage-syria-continues-government-raids-kill-29-and-war
• https://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/05/middleeast/syria-chlorine-idlib-russia-intl/
• https://www.facebook.com/EdlibEmc1/posts/2024135344466691
• https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1200664886703531&id=648124961957529
• https://twitter.com/Conflicts/status/960272586348400641
• https://twitter.com/EliotHiggins/status/960253962191556608
• https://twitter.com/HHen/status/960276642160627714
• https://twitter.com/JakeGodin/status/960343029319196673
• https://twitter.com/JakeGodin/status/960558930828169221
• https://twitter.com/leloveluck/status/960253700945186817

Open source internet links related to the Al Ltamenah incident

- https://twitter.com/MGhorab3/status/960534586215288832
- https://twitter.com/Rabya_Nasri/status/960286667440615425
- https://twitter.com/StanteaR_/status/960245206846144513
- https://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/video/wounded-people-receive-treatment-at-a-hospital-after-nieuwsfootage/914641786
- https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/241551
- https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/241563
- https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180205-syrian-opposition-urges-un-take-action-on-idlib-attack/
- https://m.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/4/syrian-activists-say-civilians-hit-by-chlorine-gas/
- https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2018/02/14/evidence-february-4th-2018-chlorine-attack-saraqib-idlib/
- https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/02/277992.htm
- http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/Syrian_Regime%E2%80%99s_Chemical_Terrorism_Hits_Syrians_for_the_211th_Time_en.pdf
- https://salonsyria.com/syria-in-a-week-5-february-2018/#.WpQVTa6nHcs
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzf0K0gzZeQ
- https://syria.liveuamap.com/en/2018/4-february-saraqeb-syriacivildef-teams-respond-to-an-attack

9.

❖ INFORMATION OBTAINED BY THE FACT-FINDING MISSION

Table A3.1 below summarises the list of physical evidence collected from various sources by the FFM. It is split into electronic evidence stored in electronic media storage devices such as USB sticks and micro SD cards, hard copy evidence, and samples. Electronic files include audio-visual captions, still images, and documents. Hard copy files consist of various documents, including drawings made by witnesses. The table also shows the list of samples collected from various sources, including environmental samples, such as gravel and soil, and other samples, such as metal pieces, and fragments.

TABLE A3.1 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE COLLECTED BY THE FACT-FINDING MISSION TEAM

Entry Number	Evidence description	Evidence reference number	Evidence source
	Electronic and hard copy files and documents		
1.	Transcend 4GB SD Card - 20 images and 3 Videos	20180216171603	Handed over by 1716
2.	Transcend 4GB SD Card - 1 image	20180303172103	Handed over by 1721
3.	Transcend 16GB µSD Card - 8 images	20180214172503	Handed over by 1725
4.	Kingston 32GB µSD Card - 129 images and 56 videos	20180211172302	Handed over by SCD
	Samples		
1.	Grass at 10 m from cylinder 2	20180219172301	Syria Civil Defence
2.	Soil at 50 m from the final resting point of cylinder 1	20180219172302	Syria Civil Defence
3.	Soil from the final resting point of cylinder 1	20180219172303	Syria Civil Defence
4.	Soil from the final resting point of cylinder 1	20180219172304	Syria Civil Defence
5.	Vegetation and soil at 5 m from cylinder 1	20180219172305	Syria Civil Defence
6.	Wipe from inside cylinder 1	20180219172306	Syria Civil Defence
7.	Wipe from inside cylinder 2	20180219172307	Syria Civil Defence
8.	Soil from crater of cylinder 2	20180219172308	Syria Civil Defence
9.	Soil from the crater of cylinder 2 under a metal piece	20180219172309	Syria Civil Defence
10.	Soil from the crater of cylinder 2	20180219172310	Syria Civil Defence
11.	Soil at 50m from crater of cylinder 2	20180219172311	Syria Civil Defence
12.	Metal piece from the impact point of cylinder 2	20180219172312	Syria Civil Defence

Entry Number	Evidence description	Evidence reference number	Evidence source
13.	H_2O wipe from cylinder 1 collected by the team	20180219172332	Syria Civil Defence
14.	H_2O wipe from cylinder 2 collected by the team	20180219172333	Syria Civil Defence

TABLE A3.2 ELECTRONIC FILES COLLECTED BY THE FACT-FINDING MISSION TEAM

Interview Number	Folder Location	File Names			
1716	D:\1716\evidence\1716	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.28.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.31 (1).jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.31.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.32.jpeg
		whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.34.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.35.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.36.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.37.jpeg
		whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.38.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.39.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.40 (1).jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.40.jpeg
		whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.41.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.42.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.43.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.44.jpeg
		whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.45.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.47 (1).jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.47.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.48.jpeg
		whatsapp video 2018-02-14 at 22.53.49.mp4	whatsapp video 2018-02-14 at 22.53.50.mp4	whatsapp video 2018-02-14 at 22.53.51.mp4	
	D:\1716\evidence\1716 -working copy	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.28.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.31 (1).jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.31.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.32.jpeg
		whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.34.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.35.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.36.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.37.jpeg
		whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.38.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.39.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.40 (1).jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.40.jpeg
		whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.41.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.42.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.43.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.44.jpeg
		whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.45.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.47 (1).jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.47.jpeg	whatsapp image 2018-02-14 at 22.53.48.jpeg

Interview Number	Folder Location	File Names			
		whatsapp video 2018-02-14 at 22.53.49.mp4	whatsapp video 2018-02-14 at 22.53.50.mp4	whatsapp video 2018-02-14 at 22.53.51.mp4	
1721	D:\1721\evidence\sd	img-20180302-wa0129.jpg			
1723	D:\1723\sampling photos and videos from scd\n0591-002.aoolf s1708 nk. 1\photo collect samples	ak9a0112.jpg	ak9a0113.jpg	ak9a0114.jpg	ak9a0115.jpg
		ak9a0116.jpg	ak9a0117.jpg	ak9a0118.jpg	ak9a0119.jpg
		ak9a0120.jpg	ak9a0121.jpg	ak9a0122.jpg	ak9a0123.jpg
		ak9a0124.jpg	ak9a0125.jpg	ak9a0126.jpg	ak9a0127.jpg
		ak9a0128.jpg	ak9a0129.jpg	ak9a0130.jpg	ak9a0131.jpg
		ak9a0132.jpg	ak9a0133.jpg	ak9a0134.jpg	ak9a0135.jpg
		ak9a0136.jpg	ak9a0137.jpg	ak9a0138.jpg	ak9a0139.jpg
		ak9a0140.jpg	ak9a0141.jpg	ak9a0142.jpg	ak9a0143.jpg
		ak9a0144.jpg	ak9a0145.jpg	ak9a0146.jpg	ak9a0147.jpg
		ak9a0148.jpg	ak9a0149.jpg	ak9a0152.jpg	ak9a0154.jpg
		ak9a0155.jpg	ak9a0156.jpg	ak9a0157.jpg	ak9a0158.jpg
		ak9a0159.jpg	ak9a0160.jpg	ak9a0161.jpg	ak9a0162.jpg
		ak9a0163.jpg	ak9a0164.jpg	ak9a0165.jpg	ak9a0166.jpg
		ak9a0167.jpg	ak9a0168.jpg	ak9a0169.jpg	ak9a0170.jpg
		ak9a0171.jpg	ak9a0172.jpg	ak9a0174.jpg	ak9a0175.jpg
		ak9a0176.jpg	ak9a0177.jpg	ak9a0178.jpg	ak9a0179.jpg
		ak9a0180.jpg	ak9a0181.jpg	ak9a0185.jpg	ak9a0186.jpg
		ak9a0187.jpg	ak9a0188.jpg	ak9a0189.jpg	ak9a0190.jpg
		ak9a0191.jpg	ak9a0192.jpg	ak9a0193.jpg	ak9a0194.jpg
		ak9a0195.jpg	ak9a0197.jpg	ak9a0198.jpg	ak9a0202.jpg
		ak9a0208.jpg	ak9a0209.jpg	ak9a0212.jpg	ak9a0213.jpg
		ak9a0214.jpg	ak9a0215.jpg	ak9a0216.jpg	ak9a0217.jpg
		ak9a0218.jpg	ak9a0219.jpg	ak9a0220.jpg	ak9a0221.jpg
		ak9a0222.jpg			
	D:\1723\sampling photos and videos from scd\n0591-002.aoolf s1708 nk. 1\photo injurd	img_1006.jpg	img_1016 (1).jpg	img_1016.jpg	img_1023.jpg
		img_1024.jpg	img_1025.jpg	img_1026.jpg	img_1027.jpg
		img_1028.jpg	img_1030.jpg	img_1031.jpg	img_1032.jpg
		img_1037.jpg	img_1038.jpg	img_1039.jpg	img_1042.jpg
		img_1043.jpg	img_1044.jpg	img_1049.jpg	img_1050.jpg
		img_1051.jpg	img_1052.jpg	img_1055.jpg	img_1056.jpg

Interview Number	Folder Location	File Names			
		img_1057.jpg	img_1058.jpg	img_1059.jpg	img_1060.jpg
		img_1061.jpg	img_1064.jpg	img_1069.jpg	img_1070.jpg
		img_1075.jpg	img_1076.jpg	img_1077.jpg	img_1083.jpg
	D:\1723\sampling photos and videos from scd\n0591-002.aoolf s1708 nk. 1\video injurd	mvi_1018.mov	mvi_1021.mov	mvi_1029.mov	mvi_1033.mov
		mvi_1034.mov	mvi_1035.mov	mvi_1036.mov	mvi_1040.mov
		mvi_1041.mov	mvi_1046.mov	mvi_1047.mov	mvi_1048.mov
		mvi_1062.mov	mvi_1078.mov	mvi_1080.mov	mvi_1081.mov
	D:\1723\sampling photos and videos from scd\n0591-002.aoolf s1708 nk. 1\videos collect samples\cannon cam	ak9a0150.mov	ak9a0151.mov	ak9a0153.mov	ak9a0173.mov
		ak9a0182.mov	ak9a0183.mov	ak9a0184.mov	ak9a0196.mov
		ak9a0199.mov	ak9a0200.mov	ak9a0201.mov	ak9a0203.mov
		ak9a0204.mov	ak9a0205.mov	ak9a0206.mov	ak9a0207.mov
		ak9a0210.mov	ak9a0211.mov	ak9a0223.mov	ak9a0224.mov
	D:\1723\sampling photos and videos from scd\n0591-002.aoolf s1708 nk. 1\videos collect samples\garmin cam	virb0015-2.mp4	virb0015-3.mp4	virb0015-4.mp4	virb0015.mp4
		virb0016.mp4	virb0017-2.mp4	virb0017-3.mp4	virb0017-4.mp4
		virb0017-5.mp4	virb0017.mp4	virb0018.mp4	virb0019.mp4
		virb0020.mp4			
	D:\1723\sampling photos and videos from scd\n0591-002.aoolf s1708 nk. 1\videos collect samples\video 360o	Dv0270084.mp4	Dv0280085.mp4	Dv0290086.mp4	Dv0310088.mp4
		Dv0320089 (1).mp4	Dv0320089.mp4	Dv0330090.mp4	
1725	D:\1725\evidence	img-20180205-wa0336.jpg	img-20180205-wa0338.jpg	img-20180205-wa0339.jpg	img-20180205-wa0340.jpg
		img-20180205-wa0341.jpg	img-20180205-wa0342.jpg	img-20180205-wa0343.jpg	img-20180205-wa0344.jpg

United Nations S/2018/479

Security Council

Distr.: General
21 May 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 17 May 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 2367 (2017), in which the Council called upon the Secretary-General to conduct, by 15 October 2017, an independent, external assessment of the structure and staffing of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), related resources, priorities and areas in which it had comparative advantages and synergies with other United Nations entities, in order to ensure that the Mission and United Nations country team were configured to most appropriately and efficiently fulfil mandated tasks.

I also have the honour to refer to my letter dated 15 November 2017 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/966), in which I brought to the attention of the members of the Council the executive summary, the observations and the full set of recommendations of the report of the independent, external assessment, as submitted by the team of experts. In follow-up to that letter, I am hereby providing an update on the implementation status of the recommendations made in the report.

Following the report of the independent and external assessment team, I established an interdepartmental and inter-agency group, led by the Department of Political Affairs. The group developed an implementation plan for the recommendations, including timelines, in close consultation with UNAMI and the United Nations country team. The plan was adopted on 9 January 2018 by the Iraq Integrated Task Force.

The Secretariat briefed the members of the Security Council on the status of implementation in an informal interactive dialogue on 7 February 2018. A further update was provided in my report pursuant to Security Council resolution 2367 (2017), issued on 17 April 2018 (S/2018/359).

Further to those updates, the implementation of the recommendations related to United Nations system coordination and to performance measurement is on track. A senior policy forum has been established in Iraq and meetings are convened regularly, providing guidance to the United Nations presence in Iraq on strategic priorities and issues affecting operations.

In addition, existing procedures and mechanisms that promote coordination and cross-system collaboration between UNAMI and the United Nations country team on thematic issues, including gender, monitoring and evaluation, reconciliation and strategic communication, have been strengthened through the development of workplans. A United Nations Development Assistance Framework working group will be established. The anticipated review of the UNAMI mandate in July 2018 will inform preparations for the 2018/19 integrated strategic framework, the formulation

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of the common country assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and other integrated strategic planning documents.

The Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and the Chief of Staff have expanded their portfolios to encompass the enhanced managerial responsibilities recommended in the report. UNAMI and the United Nations country team are coordinating closely on common services and cost-sharing processes to develop more effective, transparent service-level agreements.

The revised 2018 budget proposal for UNAMI (A/72/371/Add.10), currently being considered by the General Assembly, includes measures to augment the Mission's presence beyond Baghdad by strengthening political, research and human rights capabilities in Mosul, Basrah and Kirkuk. UNAMI is finalizing the terms of reference for the review of its Integrated Coordination Office for Development and Humanitarian Affairs, and will incorporate the findings into the 2019 budget proposal.

The Department of Safety and Security has completed the first part of its assessment of the security architecture. A subsequent assessment will be conducted following the parliamentary elections, with the intention to inform the budget submission for 2019. In addition, a full hardship review is being undertaken as preparation for the International Civil Service Commission to review the rest and recuperation cycle in all duty stations in Iraq.

I intend to provide further updates on the implementation of the recommendations in future reports to the Security Council.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

United Nations S/2018/480

Security Council

Distr.: General
21 May 2018

Original: English

Implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

Twenty-seventh semi-annual report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is the twenty-seventh semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and an assessment of the implementation of the resolution since the issuance of my previous report on the subject, on 16 October 2017 (S/2017/867), and covers developments up to 10 May 2018.

I. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

2. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) by the Security Council on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have been implemented, as highlighted in previous reports. However, a number of provisions, including with respect to the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, remain pending.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

3. Through the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council sought to strengthen the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in accordance with the Taif Accords of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon had committed themselves. That objective has remained the priority of my efforts.

4. As previously indicated in my report of 8 March 2018 on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2018/210), on 4 November 2017 in Riyadh, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Saad Hariri, announced his resignation. The President of Lebanon, Michel Aoun, subsequently issued a statement that he would await the return of the Prime Minister to Lebanon to determine next steps, while underlining the importance of national unity. On 5 November, I issued a statement to express my concern about this development, hoping that all sides would focus their efforts on supporting the continuity of the State institutions of Lebanon, in adherence to the Constitution, and safeguarding the country's security and stability, and to reaffirm the commitment of the United Nations to supporting the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Following their meeting on 10 November with President Aoun, members of the International Support Group for Lebanon expressed

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their "continuing concern regarding the situation and prevailing uncertainty in Lebanon" and welcomed "the call of the President for Prime Minister Hariri to return to Lebanon".

5. As noted in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (ibid.), on 21 November, Prime Minister Hariri returned to Lebanon. The following day, he declared his decision to put his resignation on hold at the request of the President, "to allow further consultations about its political causes", and expressed his hope that that would allow for a renewed "commitment to the Taif Accords and the basics of national consensus and resolve the controversial issues and their impact on Lebanon's relations with its Arab brothers". On 5 December, the Council of Ministers of Lebanon issued a statement confirming its commitment to its ministerial statement of 28 December 2016, noting that Lebanon must be kept out of regional conflicts and the internal affairs of Arab countries, and reiterating its commitment to resolution 1701 (2006), the Taif Accords and the Charter of the League of Arab States. Subsequently, the Prime Minister withdrew his resignation.

6. On 8 December 2017, the International Support Group for Lebanon convened a high-level meeting in Paris. In a joint statement, the Group expressed its satisfaction at the return to Beirut of the Prime Minister, noting the decision of the Council of Ministers on disassociation from any regional conflicts and wars and from the internal affairs of Arab countries, and that it would "pay close attention to the implementation of the Council's decision by all Lebanese parties" and calling upon "all Lebanese parties to implement this tangible policy of disassociation from and non-interference in external conflicts, as an important priority, as spelled out in previous declarations, in particular the 2012 Baabda Declaration". The Group reiterated the need for the full implementation of and full respect for all Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). Those messages were reinforced by the Security Council in a press statement of 19 December on the situation in Lebanon.

7. In his opening speech at the meeting of 8 December, Prime Minister Hariri emphasized his Government's commitment to the disassociation policy. He noted the unique nature of the government agreement on disassociation, stating that "all political parties agreed on the disassociation policy, and every political party [represented at] the Cabinet table is responsible about the disassociation. The guarantee is that this decision was taken unanimously". After a meeting held on 15 February 2018 with Rex Tillerson, then Secretary of State of the United States of America, President Aoun reportedly stated that "Lebanon is fully committed to the policy of self-dissociation and does not interfere in the internal affairs of States, but is not responsible for the interventions happening from outside".

8. At its December meeting, the International Support Group for Lebanon laid out an ambitious road map aimed at support for Lebanon, including a ministerial conference to support the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces, to be held in Rome (the "Rome II conference"), and an economic conference aimed at Lebanese development through reforms, to be held in Paris.

9. Marking critical progress towards the reactivation of Lebanese State institutions, the Government coordinated the holding of parliamentary elections on the basis of the electoral law adopted in June 2017. On 22 January 2018, President Aoun and Prime Minister Hariri signed a decree calling for parliamentary elections on 6 May, with out-of-country voting to be held on 27 and 29 April. Of the 597 candidates, 86 were women, representing 14.4 per cent. The electoral campaign period was reportedly marked by increased rhetoric along sectarian lines.

10. The voter turnout for the elections on 6 May was 49.2 per cent. At the time of reporting, preliminary results indicated a decrease in the representation of the Future Movement, an increase in that of the Lebanese Forces and a consolidation of the

presence of Hizbullah and the Amal Movement in Parliament. Among the 128 elected Members of Parliament, 6 are women. According to electoral observers from the European Union, "voting on election day was generally peaceful and the administration of polling efficient, with the presence of politically diverse candidate and list agents. Counting and tabulation were transparent. All European Union Election Observation Mission observers were able to observe the polling process without hindrance".

11. In a statement on 8 May, I congratulated Lebanon on the holding of parliamentary elections, the first to have taken place since 2009. I added that "the elections represent a vital step in strengthening Lebanon's State institutions and consolidating its democratic tradition" and that I was looking forward to the formation of the new Government. In a statement on 9 May, the Spokesperson of the European External Action Service stated that, as noted by the European Union observers, "the elections were well conducted and generally peaceful, which is a clear sign of the maturity of the Lebanese democratic institutions and the aspirations of the Lebanese people to overcome the persisting fragilities to achieve a democratic and united country", adding that increasing women's participation in politics would be an important element looking ahead. In a statement on 10 May, the International Support Group for Lebanon, meeting in Beirut, congratulated "the Lebanese people and authorities for the completion of parliamentary elections on 6 May ... in a generally calm and peaceful climate", encouraged "the swift formation of a new Government" and looked forward to "working with the new Government as it follows up on its international commitments, including under resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006)" and to "the resumption of a Lebanese-led dialogue towards a national defence strategy in the post-elections period".

12. The number of registered refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic hosted by Lebanon decreased slightly compared with the previous reporting period, totalling 986,942 as at 1 May 2018. On 1 February, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the United Nations launched the 2018 update of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, appealing for $2.68 billion to support 2.8 million people with humanitarian assistance, as well as investment in the country's public infrastructure, services and the local economy. At a conference entitled "Supporting the future of Syria and the region", held in Brussels on 24 and 25 April and co-chaired by the European Union and the United Nations, $4.4 billion was pledged for the Syria crisis response, including in Lebanon.

13. In its resolution 1680 (2006), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request made by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. This remains critical to enable proper border control and management, including the movement of people and the potential movement of arms. While progress in that regard remains elusive, including as a result of the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, there has been some discernible improvement since the previous reporting period in the extension of the presence of the Lebanese State along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic, including through the construction of border observation posts of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

14. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain elements essential to guaranteeing national sovereignty and territorial integrity. While border delineation is a bilateral matter, progress on that issue remains an obligation of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with resolution 1680 (2006). On 14 December 2017, Lebanese and Syrian authorities, for the first time since 2012, reopened the Qa'-Jusiyah border crossing in north-eastern Lebanon, the only crossing of the five border crossings between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic that had been consistently closed owing to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

15. Cross-border violations of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity continued on both the eastern and northern borders. Between October 2017 and March 2018, there were reports of two shooting incidents across the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, marking a significant decrease compared with previous reporting periods.

16. In violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006), Israel continued to occupy the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line. By identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 13 April 2018, the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations transmitted a letter from her country's Minister of National Defence in which the Minister noted, inter alia, "the ongoing occupation of the northern part of Ghajar town ... and Lebanese territory along the Blue Line".

17. There was no progress in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. Furthermore, neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has responded to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641). During a tour of Shab'a town in southern Lebanon on 13 April, Prime Minister Hariri said that "recovering the Shab'a Farms and the hills of Kfar Shuba is the responsibility of the State".

18. Unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, of the Israel Defense Forces continued to make almost daily overflights of Lebanon during the reporting period, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 30 October 2017, the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations stated that, on 7 September, four Israeli aircraft had violated Lebanese airspace before targeting Syrian territory, which he described as "a flagrant breach of Lebanese sovereignty". In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 8 February 2018 (A/72/742-S/2018/109), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations conveyed her Government's message that Israel had "once again violated Lebanese airspace ... in order to carry out raids in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic". In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 6 April 2018 (A/72/831-S/2018/336), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon conveyed her Government's message that "on 31 March 2018, Israel violated Lebanese airspace, using an unmanned aerial vehicle armed with four missiles. It subsequently sent a second aerial vehicle to bomb the first aerial vehicle and the site where the latter had crashed". In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 10 April 2018 (A/72/832-S/2018/342), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon conveyed her Government's message that "on 9 April 2018, four Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace ... in order to conduct raids in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic", warning that "the repeated violation of its airspace by Israel to conduct raids in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic poses a particular threat". In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 12 April 2018 (S/2018/345), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations alleged that "Lebanese violations of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) are daily occurrences".

19. As specified in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2018/210), pursuant to Security Council resolution 1757 (2007), I extended the mandate of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon from 1 March 2018 for a period of three years, or upon completion of the cases before the Special Tribunal if sooner.

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

20. The Government of Lebanon continued its efforts to extend the authority of the State throughout all Lebanese territory, as called for in the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004). Remaining at the forefront of such efforts were the Lebanese Armed Forces, including through its further deployment, and the Internal Security Forces. Yet, the endeavour continued to be challenged.

21. In its statement of 8 December, the International Support Group for Lebanon commended "the role played by the Lebanese Armed Forces and by all State security institutions in protecting the country, its borders and its population". It recalled that the Lebanese Armed Forces were "the only legitimate armed forces of Lebanon, as enshrined in the Lebanese constitution and the Taif agreement". It called upon the international community "to continue, coordinate and step up its support to these institutions" and, in that context, welcomed "the holding of the Rome II meeting to be hosted by Italy."

22. As part of the efforts by the international community to support Lebanese institutions and contribute to the expansion of State authority, the Rome II conference was held in Rome on 15 March 2018 under the auspices of the International Support Group for Lebanon and under the chairmanship of the United Nations and Italy, gathering together the representatives of 40 countries and organizations. At the conference, Prime Minister Hariri emphasized the need to build State security institutions as "the sole defenders of Lebanon's sovereignty".

23. Participants in the conference "endorsed the Lebanese Government's vision of the Lebanese Armed Forces as the sole defender of the Lebanese State and protector of its borders, and of the Internal Security Forces as a key instrument in building the monopoly of the use of force by the Lebanese State".

24. In addition, conference participants "recalled relevant provisions of the Taif Accords and of Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006), including provisions that there be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese State, no foreign forces in Lebanon without the consent of its Government, and no sale or supply of arms-related materiel to Lebanon except as authorized by its Government". Participants welcomed the updated capability development plan of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the strategic plan of the Internal Security Forces. The Security Council reiterated those messages in a press statement issued on 27 March 2018. Participants in the Rome conference also made pledges of financial support for the security institutions.

25. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued to undertake efforts to maintain the country's stability. On 10 November 2017, five soldiers were injured when a patrol from the Lebanese Armed Forces came under intense gunfire during an exchange with armed men in the area of Dar al-Wasi'ah, in Baalbek. Army units reportedly conducted raids in the area that resulted in the seizure of several weapons, ammunition, bombs and drugs. On 4 January 2018, according to a statement from the Directorate of Orientation of the Lebanese Armed Forces, during an operation to arrest one of the alleged perpetrators of the attacks against the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces in Arsal in 2017, the Lebanese Armed Forces were attacked by gunmen, which led to the wounding of one soldier and caused damage to two military vehicles. On 5 February, in an overnight operation to arrest a wanted suspect in Tripoli, a Lebanese soldier was killed and a number of others injured. The wanted individual was also killed.

26. Arrests of individuals on charges of terrorism, including belonging to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, most of which were related to the battle of Arsal in July 2017, continued during the reporting period.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

27. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, a key provision of the resolution that has yet to be implemented. The provision reflects and reaffirms a decision to which all Lebanese committed themselves in the Taif Accords. It is critical that the Accords be preserved and implemented by all in order to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among Lebanese citizens and to strengthen the institutions of the State. The Lebanese State should increase its efforts to achieve a monopoly on the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout its territory.

28. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continued to operate outside the control of the Government, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside government control, Hizbullah is the most heavily armed militia in the country. In a democratic State, it remains a fundamental anomaly that a political party maintains a militia that has no accountability to the democratic, governmental institutions of the State but has the power to take that State to war. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups and the alleged increase by Hizbullah of its arsenal pose a serious challenge to the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In addition, several Palestinian armed groups continued to operate in the country, inside and outside the Palestine refugee camps.

29. There has been no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for in the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004). Since the adoption of that resolution, no specific steps have been taken to tackle that crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. The maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal outside of a legal framework and its involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be denounced by a number of voices in Lebanon, who consider those issues to be destabilizing factors in the country and ones that undermine democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued presence of such arms as an implicit threat that the weapons could be used within Lebanon for political reasons.

30. As included in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (ibid.), in early December 2017, video footage emerged of Qais al-Khazali, of the Iraqi Shi'te militia Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, visiting South Lebanon in military uniform in the company of Hizbullah representatives. On 9 December, Prime Minister Hariri issued a statement asserting that he had contacted military and security officials to investigate and to take measures to prevent any person from carrying out military activities and prevent Qais al-Khazali's re-entry into Lebanon. In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 12 December 2017 (S/2017/1043), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations stated that that visit constituted a violation of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004). On 15 January 2018, an arrest warrant was issued in Lebanon for Qais al-Khazali. On 26 December 2017, a photograph appeared on social media in which Haj Hamza (Abu al-Abbas), the commander of an Aleppo-based pro-Syrian government militia, Imam al-Baqir Brigade, appeared to be standing near the Blue Line, as specified in my report on resolution 1701 (2006).

31. In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 5 February 2018 (S/2018/91), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations stated that a senior Iranian official, Ebrahim Raisi, had visited the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon close to the Blue Line on 28 January and had been accompanied by "uniformed and armed members of Hizbullah". The Permanent Representative also stated that, prior to his visit to the Blue Line, "Raisi ... called for strengthening the 'axis of resistance' — Iran, Lebanon, and other forces" against Israel. Responding to that letter, the Minister of National Defence of Lebanon, in the above-mentioned letter dated 13 April 2018, stated that Mr. Raisi had been accompanied by a Hizbullah member of Parliament and that "his escort was not visibly carrying weapons".

32. In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 28 November 2017 (S/2017/1000), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations expressed concern at what he said was a statement by the Commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Major General Mohamed Ali Jaafari, which he said expressed "Iran's intentions and actions taken to continue arming Hizbullah". In response, in a letter addressed to me dated 5 December 2017 (S/2017/1019), the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations accused Israel of making "false and baseless accusations".

33. During the reporting period, the Government of Lebanon recommitted to making progress on the development of a national defence strategy, including through statements by representatives at the highest levels. On 6 December 2017, in a statement, President Aoun's office said that, "through dialogue between the Lebanese on various issues of concern, especially the defence strategy, we can achieve common grounds that promote stability and fortify unity". In its statement of 8 December, the International Support Group for Lebanon called on all Lebanese parties to resume discussions towards a consensus on a national defence strategy and welcomed the statement of the President of Lebanon in that regard. On 8 May 2018, in a televised address to the nation after the parliamentary elections, President Aoun reportedly stated that he would be calling for parties to sit down and discuss the implementation of the Taif Accords and a national defence strategy.

34. Ahead of the Rome II conference, President Aoun, on 12 March 2018, emphasized the importance of providing the Lebanese Armed Forces with qualitative weapons "to enable it to play its role through the national defence strategy, which will be discussed by Lebanese leaders after the parliamentary elections in May that will result in a new Government". In his speech at the opening session of the conference, Prime Minister Hariri referred to President Aoun's commitment to discuss the national defence strategy following the May elections. He also joined the President's call to the international community to support the Lebanese Armed Forces, "to enable them to assume their duty of preserving security and stability in accordance with the national defence strategy". Conference participants called on all Lebanese parties to resume discussions towards a consensus on a national defence strategy and welcomed the President's statement of 12 March in that regard. That message was reiterated by the Security Council in its above-mentioned press statement of 27 March.

35. In a televised speech on 21 March, Hizbullah's secretary-general, Hassan Nasrallah, expressed his party's openness to discussing a national defence strategy, recalling that Hizbullah had presented its vision during the national dialogue of 2006. In the same speech, he expressed Hizbullah's support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces, emphasizing, however, the importance of giving them "arms to protect from the Israeli threats and attacks".

36. The participation of Hizbullah and other Lebanese in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to breach the policy of disassociation and the principles of the Baabda Declaration.

37. The security situation in Palestine refugee camps remained mostly stable, but relatively tense. On 7 December 2017, in the camps of Beddawi, Nahr el-Bared, Ein El-Helweh and Mieh Mieh, Palestine refugees, through sit-ins and peaceful strikes, protested the decision made by the United States on 6 December to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. On 18 March 2018, thousands of Palestine refugees reportedly took part in a Hamas-sponsored event in Sidon marking 100 days since that decision. In a speech made on 11 December 2017 at a rally to protest the United States decision, Hizbullah's secretary-general Nasrallah called for the "unification of all resistance ... factions in the region" through the setting-up of a unified strategy for confrontation, pledging that Hizbullah would live up to its responsibilities in that regard.

38. Separately, in early March 2018, a string of seemingly unrelated incidents occurred in the refugee camps of Rashidieh and Shatila, apparently as the result of personal disputes that had turned into factional fighting. On 4 March, a personal dispute between a Syrian and a Palestine refugee reportedly erupted in the Rashidieh camp and escalated into a shoot-out involving members of the Islamist group Jund Ansar Allah, resulting in the killing of two individuals and the setting ablaze of a number of homes and shops. On 7 March, clashes involving machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades reportedly erupted between the Fatah al-Intifada and al-Sa'iqa groups at the Shatila refugee camp, killing one person and wounding two others. A suspect was reportedly arrested by the Lebanese Armed Forces shortly after the clashes. On 17 March, the killing of a member of Fatah in the Mieh Mieh refugee camp reportedly resulted in armed clashes between Fatah members and the camp's security forces, as well as in high tensions across the camps.

39. The situation in Ein El-Helweh was marked by a relative lull during the reporting period, including as tensions between Fatah and Islamist factions notably decreased. On 28 October 2017, the General Director of the General Directorate of General Security, Major General Abbas Ibrahim, reportedly informed the media of the departure from Ein El-Helweh to the Syrian Arab Republic of the Islamist militant Shadi al-Mawlawi, who had been involved in clashes in Tripoli, including against the Lebanese Armed Forces, in 2014. According to information reportedly released by Bilal Badr on social media on 2 January 2018, the latter left Ein El-Helweh and settled in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 9 February, armed clashes in the camp between Fatah and members of an Islamist armed group reportedly left three injured. On 4 April, two people were killed and three others wounded in a gunfight between two members of Islamist factions in Ein El-Helweh. During the reporting period, three individuals wanted by the Lebanese authorities turned themselves in and one was handed over by the joint Palestinian security forces. Four individuals, including a 17-year-old, from Ein El-Helweh were arrested on terrorism-related charges.

40. The ability of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to deliver its essential health, education, relief and social services has been challenged, including following the announcement by the United States on 17 January 2018 of its decision to reduce its funding to the Agency. On 15 March, Egypt, Jordan and Sweden co-chaired an extraordinary ministerial conference in Rome entitled "Preserving dignity and sharing responsibility — mobilizing collective action for UNRWA", which I attended. As of May 2018, the overall shortfall in the Agency's budget had been reduced to less than $246 million.

41. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps also continued. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 in the context of the national dialogue,

and confirmed at subsequent sessions, to disarm Palestinian militias outside the camps within a six-month period, no progress was made during the reporting period with regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada in the country.

42. On 14 January 2018, the Hamas official Mohammad Hamdan was reportedly wounded in the suspected explosion of an improvised explosive device that targeted his car in Sidon. A statement reportedly issued by the Hamas media bureau claimed that "preliminary investigations seemed to point to Israel's responsibility for the attack". Following an investigation by the Lebanese authorities and the arrest of one of the alleged perpetrators, the Lebanese Ministry of Interior and Municipalities announced on 26 January that the suspect had admitted to the attack and claimed to have been directed by Israeli intelligence agencies. Israel has firmly denied any involvement in the attack.

II. Observations

43. Lebanon recently witnessed several tumultuous months, during which Lebanese leaders came to the fore to confront existing challenges in a united fashion. The international conferences held in support of Lebanon are a testament to the importance that members of the international community attach to preserving the stability of Lebanon in a region in turmoil. The conferences also demonstrated the sustained efforts that international players and Lebanese leaders have made to reinforce institutions of the State, in particular its legitimate security forces.

44. The emphasis on the disassociation policy has been at the forefront of the international community's message in its efforts to maintain the stability of Lebanon. Respect for the disassociation policy and the Baabda Declaration of 2012 is necessary to prevent Lebanon from becoming embroiled in conflicts in the region. I note the renewed commitment to the disassociation policy expressed unanimously by the Lebanese Cabinet, as well as by President Aoun and Prime Minister Hariri. I echo and support the Prime Minister's message that every party is responsible for the implementation of the disassociation policy. I join my voice with those of other international actors in their repeated calls for tangible implementation of the disassociation policy without delay.

45. I have already noted, in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2018/210), that unauthorized visits by foreign militia members to South Lebanon undermine the authority of the State and run counter to the spirit of disassociation.

46. The widespread presence of weapons outside the control of the State, combined with the existence of heavily armed militias, undermines the security of Lebanese citizens. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern. I reiterate my calls for all concerned to contribute to efforts to reinforce the institutions of the Lebanese State. I also reiterate my call for Hizbullah and all other parties concerned not to engage in any military activity inside or outside Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004). I continue to urge the Government and the armed forces of Lebanon to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah and other armed groups from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004).

47. Hizbullah's engagement in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is in breach of the disassociation policy and the principles of the Baabda Declaration of 2012. The

involvement of Hizbullah in the Syrian Arab Republic for several years demonstrates the failure of Hizbullah to disarm and its refusal to be accountable to the State institutions that the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) was intended to strengthen.

48. I also continue to be concerned by the reported involvement of Hizbullah, as well as that of other Lebanese elements, in fighting elsewhere in the region, which carries the risk of entangling Lebanon in the regional conflicts and poses risks to the stability of Lebanon and of the region. Such activities challenge the prospect of the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004). I call upon countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah to encourage the transformation of that armed group into a solely civilian political party, and its disarmament, in accordance with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004), in the best interests of Lebanon and of regional peace and security.

49. I congratulate Lebanon on the holding of parliamentary elections on 6 May, which represents a vital step in strengthening its State institutions and consolidating its democratic tradition. In particular, the renewal of the country's Parliament through elections for the first time in almost 10 years is necessary for Lebanese citizens to feel adequately represented. I urge all members of Parliament, once they are in office, to ensure efficient political decision-making on issues affecting the everyday lives of citizens and to further the normalization of the country's institutional functioning. As I have stated, I look forward to the expeditious formation of the new Government and call on the political leaders of Lebanon to work in a spirit of unity and with a view to furthering the ambitious agenda set out by the country and its international partners.

50. I welcome the efforts of Lebanon to develop and modernize its security institutions, including through the development of strategic plans defining its vision and its resource needs. I echo the endorsement by the International Support Group for Lebanon of the Government's vision of the Lebanese Armed Forces as the sole defender of the Lebanese State and protector of its borders, and that of the Internal Security Forces as a key instrument in building the monopoly of the use of force by the State. I welcome the pledges made to financially and technically support the implementation of these plans, and call on partners to further enhance their support in order to respond to the needs outlined by the Government of Lebanon. I renew the call of the participants for Lebanon to fully implement all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1559 (2004).

51. I welcome President Aoun's commitment on 12 March to develop a national defence strategy after the parliamentary elections. I am encouraged by the President's confidence that common ground in that regard can be achieved through dialogue, and I reaffirm the readiness of the United Nations to support that process. I heed the call of the participants in the International Support Group for Lebanon for all Lebanese parties to resume discussions on a national defence strategy, and I look forward to early tangible steps in that regard. Now is the time for Lebanon to resume the national dialogue as a Lebanese-owned, Lebanese-led process, in line with the country's international obligations. It is important that such a strategy address the need to achieve a State monopoly over the possession and use of weapons and the use of force. I encourage President Aoun to continue to demonstrate leadership in steering forward that effort, and I call on all political leaders to support it.

52. I remain concerned that the financial pressure being exerted on UNRWA could hinder its ability to deliver its essential health, educational, social and relief services to highly vulnerable Palestine refugees. UNRWA services, in many cases, are lifesaving for the population it serves. Their discontinuation would have drastic consequences, both for the people who benefit from such services and for the overall stability in the Palestine refugee camps and the region. I am grateful to those Member

States that have advanced their annual commitments and that made pledges at the Rome extraordinary ministerial conference to enable UNRWA to continue operations in the near term, and I look forward to significant additional financial support. Such efforts are without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestine refugee question in the context of a comprehensive settlement in the region.

53. The continued political and socioeconomic fragility in the Palestine refugee camps is an environment conducive to the degeneration of personal disputes into factional fighting, which at times results in casualties. I renew my call for the Government to implement earlier decisions made in the context of the national dialogue in 2006 pertaining to the disarmament of Palestinian militias, as called for in the document entitled "A unified Lebanese vision for the Palestinian refugees affairs in Lebanon", the implementation of which I encourage.

54. Lebanon continues to face on its own soil the political, security, humanitarian and social impacts of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. I welcome the continuous generosity of Lebanon in responding to the crisis. I urge donors to offer concrete support to Lebanon in its response to the crisis.

55. I condemn all violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. They also undermine the credibility of the Lebanese security services and generate anxiety among the civilian population. I renew my calls for Israel to adhere to its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, as well as to immediately cease its overflights of Lebanese airspace.

56. The decrease in the number of incidents of shooting, shelling, air strikes, rocket attacks and incursions from the Syrian Arab Republic is noteworthy. I note, however, that no progress has been made by the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon in the delineation of their common border, which is critical to enable proper border control and management, including the movement of people and the potential movement of arms. I call upon all concerned to cease violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

57. Lebanon has received high-level attention from the international community on the political, economic and security fronts over the past few months. The onus is now on the country to demonstrate meaningful progress on key policy issues of relevance to resolution 1559 (2004), including the tangible implementation of the disassociation policy and the resumption of a dialogue on a national defence strategy. I therefore count on the continued commitment of the Government of Lebanon to its international obligations, and I call upon all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). The United Nations will continue its efforts towards the full implementation of those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

United Nations S/2018/481

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 May 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 18 May 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith an information bulletin dated 18 May 2018 from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) D. **Polyanskiy**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

18-08212 (E) 240518 240518

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Annex to the letter dated 18 May 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (18 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported one incident of gunfire in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,809 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,564.46 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 22 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 80,585 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,512.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/482

Security Council

Distr.: General
12 June 2018
English
Original: French

Letter dated 21 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to my letter dated 17 May 2018 (S/2018/473), I have the honour to transmit herewith the communiqué issued on 19 May 2018 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco concerning the recent violations and provocative actions carried out by the "polisario" in the Moroccan town of Tifariti, which is situated to the east of the defence mechanism in Moroccan Sahara (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Omar **Hilale**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative

18-09563 (E) 140618 140618

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Annex to the letter dated 21 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Communiqué by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco

Algeria and the "polisario", driven back by the latest United Nations Security Council resolution on Moroccan Sahara, and visibly embarrassed by the confirmation of ties to the terrorist group Hezbollah, have chosen to rush headlong into a further deterioration of the situation through multiple childish and irresponsible agitations.

In this context, the Kingdom of Morocco vigorously condemns the recent provocations by the "polisario" in the area of Tifariti, to the east of the defence mechanism in Moroccan Sahara.

The Kingdom of Morocco considers this a new and serious violation of the ceasefire in flagrant defiance of the authority of the United Nations Security Council.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which has officially seized the President of the Security Council and its members, the United Nations Secretary-General and MINURSO of the matter, requests them to fulfil their responsibilities and to take the necessary measures against these unacceptable actions.

At a time when the Security Council is calling for the resumption of the political process with a view to finding a realistic, practicable and enduring solution to the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara, these provocations by the other parties seriously undermine United Nations efforts.

Morocco regrets that this escalation has occurred with the blessing and complicity of a neighbouring country, a member of the Maghreb Arab Union, which has, however, committed a double violation of the charter of that organization by closing its borders and by harbouring in its territory an armed movement that threatens the territorial integrity of another member. This country, rather than respecting the principles of good neighbourliness and the requirements of regional stability, stubbornly encourages its mercenaries of the "polisario" in their destabilizing actions, in violation of international law.

Far from being diminished, the responsibility of Algeria and the "polisario" towards the international community has only continued to increase. Morocco officially requests the relevant United Nations entities to conduct an international inquiry to shed light on the situation in the Tindouf camps administered by the "polisario" in Algerian territory, where our fellow Moroccan citizens and brothers are being held in degrading and inhumane conditions, and where the humanitarian aid provided by the international community is diverted and sold in the host country markets for the personal enrichment of the *nomenklatura* of the "polisario".

The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its irrefutable determination to defend its territorial integrity and national unity throughout the territory of Moroccan Sahara, and requests the United Nations and MINURSO in particular to fulfil their mandate in the face of repeated violations of the ceasefire.

United Nations S/2018/483

Security Council

Distr.: General
23 May 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 21 May 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period from 19 to 21 May 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) D. **Polyanskiy**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

18-08340 (E) 240518 250518

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Annex to the letter dated 21 May 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (19 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported three incidents of gunfire: two in Aleppo Governorate and one in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations: one in Balas, Aleppo Governorate, and one in Tabiyah, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. In total, 890 food parcels were distributed. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 3.8 tons.

In total, 1,811 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,568.26 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 83 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 80,668 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,512.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (20 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported four incidents of gunfire in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported two incidents of gunfire in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Dayr al-Bukht, Dar'a Governorate: 445 food parcels were distributed. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 1.9 tons.

In total, 1,812 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,570.16 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 110 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 80,778 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,512.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (21 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported three incidents of gunfire: two in Aleppo Governorate and one in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation: 445 food parcels were distributed in Marrat, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 1.9 tons.

In total, 1,813 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,572.06 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 17 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 80,795 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, one ceasefire agreement has been signed with Najih in Dar'a Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,513.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.